

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesy extended in the telephone interview on March 14, 2001 and subsequent communications. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration in view of the foregoing amendments to the claims and the following remarks.

STATUS OF THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-5, 7-15 and 17-20 are pending in this application. Of the pending claims, claims 1 and 11 are independent claims. Claims 1, 4, 11 and 14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e). Claims 2, 3, 5, 7-10, 12, 13, 15 and 17-20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). By this amendment, claims 1 and 11 have been amended, and claims 21 and 22 have been added. No new matter has been added.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C §102

Claims 1, 4, 11 and 14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,081,591 to Skoog (hereinafter "Skoog").

The Examiner has rejected the claims stating that "devices that provide information to calling parties on the status of the called parties, i.e., signaling information, typically provide the callers with information concerning the availability of the called party, e.g., whether the called party is busy." During the telephone interview, the Examiner also pointed out that "an available agent" should be a random agent, not a specific agent.

Skoog is cited as disclosing a signaling network gateway device. As indicated by the Examiner, Skoog discloses that "[p]rivate network 24 may be a private branch exchange (PBX), an automatic call distributor (ACD), a computer network such as a local area network (LAN) or a wide area network (WAN), and the like." (column 11, lines 7-10)

Claim 1, as amended, is directed to a method for connecting a call to an agent of a plurality of agents that is connected to disparate telecommunications networks. The method comprises the steps of receiving a query from one of a plurality of telecommunications networks regarding whether at least one agent, among the plurality of agents, is available; responding to the query with a determined availability of any available agents; determining which available agent is to be connected based on the availability of the agent as well as one of an agent skill level and a most idle agent criteria; and connecting the call to the determined agent.

With the features of the invention as recited, e.g., in claim 1, the availability of an agent who is simultaneously connected to several communications networks such as PSTN, wireless communication network and IP network, can be updated whenever the agent is associated/dissociated with one of the multiple networks. For example, when an agent who is simultaneously reachable through multiple communication devices (e.g., wired telephone, cellular phone, Internet etc.) starts communication with a caller through one of the communication devices (e.g., wired telephone), the agent may not be available through other communication devices such as cellular phone and Internet although the other communication devices themselves are available.

It is submitted that Skoog does not teach or suggest "receiving a query from one of a plurality of telecommunications networks regarding whether at least one agent, among the plurality of agents, is available" as claimed.

Claim 11 is an apparatus (system) claim which has similar features to claim 1 and is believed patentable for similar reasons.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that neither claim 1 nor claims 11 is anticipated by or rendered obvious in view of the art of record.

Added claims 21 and 22 are directed to, among other things, a feature of determining the availability of the plurality of agents based on status whether or not an agent is in communication with one of the at least two disparate telecommunication networks.

Applicants respectfully submit that the art of record does not teach or suggest the invention as claimed in claims 21 and 22.

Reconsideration and allowance of this application is respectfully solicited.

Applicants have not individually addressed the rejection of the dependent claims because Applicants believe that the foregoing amendments places the independent claims from which they depend in condition for allowance. Applicants, however, reserve the right to address such rejections of the dependent claims should such be necessary.

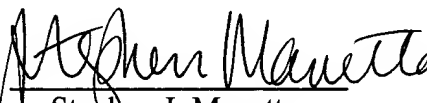
CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of this application. In the event that a telephone conference would facilitate examination of this application in any way, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the number provided.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: March 21, 2001

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Please amend claims 1 and 11 as follows:

1. (Two Times Amended) A method for connecting a call to one of a plurality of agents in a call center that is connected to disparate telecommunications networks, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a query from one of a plurality of telecommunications networks regarding [an availability of an agent of a plurality of agents for receiving a call] whether at least one agent, among the plurality of agents, is available, each telecommunications network being a disparate telecommunications network with respect to other telecommunications networks of the plurality of telecommunications networks, the agent being coupled to each disparate telecommunications network;

responding to the query with a determined availability of any available agents;

determining [the] which available agent is to be connected based on the availability of the agent as well as one of an agent skill level and a most idle agent criteria; and

[responding to the query with the determined availability of the agent; and]

connecting the call to the determined agent.

11. (Two Times Amended) A system comprising:

at least one agent, among a plurality of agents in a call center, receiving calls from at least two disparate telecommunications networks; and

a processor coupled to the at least one agent and to each telecommunications network from which the agent receives calls, the processor receiving a query from a

telecommunications network regarding [an availability of the at least one agent for receiving a call] whether at least one agent among the plurality of agents is available, determining the at least one agent based on the availability of the agent as well as one of an agent skill level and a most idle agent criteria, and responding to the query with the determined availability of the at least one agent.